

Narcotics Review, June 1986

**Mexico**

The Mexican Government reacted recently to increasing lawlessness in Sinaloa State and to opposition charges of drug-related corruption. Acting on the orders of President de la Madrid, a combined force of about 1,300 federal and state police and military personnel conducted searches throughout Sinaloa for illegal weapons and stolen vehicles. According to Mexican press reports, Institutional Revolutionary Party leaders forced three senior state officials to resign just prior to the operation, apparently because of alleged involvement with drug traffickers. Sinaloa is one of Mexico's most important opium refining and growing regions and has the highest crime rate in the country. The ruling party faces a strong challenge

from the conservative National Action Party in a gubernatorial election there in October. De la Madrid probably was trying to deflect opposition criticism and prevent further erosion of public support. These moves might also be an attempt to divert US pressure for more forceful drug control measures. Operations were not sustained long enough to disrupt the entrenched trafficking networks in Sinaloa, however. [REDACTED]

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Drug-related violence continues in Mexico. In April, fighting broke out on two separate occasions over marijuana cultivation rights in the states of Oaxaca and Jalisco, and 17 people were killed. The US Embassy reported that Mexican officials tried to cover up the Oaxaca incident's narcotics connection—in an apparent effort to divert attention from the government's failure to suppress the drug resurgence. Competition in the drug industry is likely to remain keen given the depressed economy, and direct government intervention will be needed to curb drug violence.

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At US insistence, Mexican drug control officials have agreed to take steps to improve the operational efficiency of the aerial spray eradication campaign:

- Three Bell 212 helicopters will be transferred to the spray program in hopes that their extended range and greater capacity will result in increased eradication.
- A Turbo Thrush fixed-wing aircraft will be integrated into the program to free more helicopters for operations against hard-to-reach fields.
- Pilots will undergo refresher training in aerial fumigation techniques to improve flight safety.

These measures probably will add to progress already achieved in 1986—the total area sprayed during the first two months was up by 8 percent over the same period in 1985. The gains, however, will be short lived unless Mexico makes a sustained effort against corruption, the greatest obstacle to improved drug eradication. [REDACTED]

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Economic conditions are spurring marijuana cultivation in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] World demand and prices for henequen fiber fell dramatically after the development of synthetics, and recent efforts to persuade farmers to grow revenue-producing food crops have been unsuccessful. Distant from the focus of Mexican antidrug enforcement, the Yucatan Peninsula could move beyond its current role as a drug transshipment point to become an important marijuana growing area. [REDACTED]

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